

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) A computer system for conducting an auction through a computer network, the system comprising:

a posting means for posting to a computerized merchandise catalog information that is accessible through the computer network, the information describing each lot in a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot including at least one item, the posting means being available to add a lot for auction during an auction of another lot, wherein the information related to items in each lot is automatically updated in the merchandise catalog as items in each lot are made available for auction;

a bid receiving means for receiving a bid for at least a portion of a first lot of the plurality of lots;

a bid validation means for examining ~~the bid~~ and validating a characteristic of the bid during and prior to a close of the auction, wherein the characteristic is a bid format; and

a bid categorizing means for determining whether the bid is successful or unsuccessful; and

storing the bid in a bid database.

19. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 18, further comprising an auction selection means for associating each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats.

20. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 19, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one selected from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

21. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 18, wherein the bid receiving means receives the bid from a bid form.

22. (Currently Amended) The computer system in claim 18, wherein the posting means is adapted to receive a message posted through the computer network corresponding to a second lot and to post the message in association with the descriptive information for ~~[[that]]~~ the second lot.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 18, wherein the bid receiving means is for receiving bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least two lots having different associated auction formats, and wherein the bid categorizing the means is for automatically categorizing the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with the associated auction format for each ~~[[lot]]~~ of the at least two lots.

25. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 18, further comprising proxy bidding means for automatically generating for at least the portion of the first lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.

26. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting an auction business through a computer network, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

posting by at least one seller on a computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of a first lot of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot of the plurality of lots including at least one item;

adding a second lot to the plurality of lots during an auction of ~~another~~ the first lot of the plurality of lots by posting on the computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of items in the ~~added~~ second lot, wherein the information pertaining to the ~~added~~ second lot is added to the merchandise catalog as at least a portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the first lot of the plurality of lots is made available for auction;

receiving a bid from a bidder for at least ~~[[a]]~~ the portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the first lot of the plurality of lots;

validating ~~one or more of a format and a content of the bid~~ a characteristic of the bid during and prior to a close of the auction of the first lot of the plurality of lots, wherein the characteristic is a bid format; [[and]]

determining whether the bid for the at least the portion of the first lot is successful or unsuccessful~~[[.]]; and~~

storing an indication of whether the bid is successful or unsuccessful.

27. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 26, further comprising associating each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one selected from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein the ~~step of~~ receiving further comprises the ~~step of~~ receiving the bid from a bid form.

30. (Currently Amended) The method in claim 26, further comprising the ~~step of~~ receiving an electronic message pertaining to at least ~~[[a]]~~ the portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the first lot and posting the electronic message in association with the descriptive information for ~~[[that]]~~ the first lot.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein the ~~step of~~ receiving further comprises receiving bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

33. (Currently Amended) The method in claim 32, wherein the ~~step of~~ determining further comprises ~~the step of~~ automatically categorizing the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with an associated auction format associated with each lot.

34. (Currently Amended) The method in claim 26, further comprising the ~~step of~~ automatically generating for at least the portion of the first lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.

35. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a computer to conduct an auction through a computer network comprising the steps of:

posting by at least one seller on a computerized merchandise catalog information that is descriptive of at least one of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot having at least one item;

either adding items to or deleting items from a lot of the plurality of lots available for auction and posted to the merchandise catalog during an auction of another lot of the plurality of lots, wherein information relating to an item in [[a]] the lot is added to or deleted from the merchandise catalog as items in each lot are to be either made available for auction or no longer available for auction;

receiving a bid for a portion of [[a]] the lot from the plurality of lots from a bidder;

validating ~~one or more of a format and a content of the bid~~ a characteristic of the bid during and prior to a close of the auction, wherein the characteristic is a bid format; and

determining whether the received bid is successful or unsuccessful.

36. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for associating each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats so that at least two lots have different associated auction formats.

37. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 36, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one selected from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

38. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for receiving the bid for the lot from a bid form.

39. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising instructions for receiving a message pertaining to at least a portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the lot and posting the message in association with the descriptive information for ~~[[that]]~~ the lot.

40. (Canceled)

41. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, wherein the instructions for receiving further comprises instructions for receiving bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

42. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium in claim 41, wherein the instructions for determining further comprises instructions for automatically categorizing the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with the associated format for each lot.

43. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium in claim 35, further comprising ~~the step of~~ automatically generating for the portion of the lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.

44. (Currently Amended) A system for conducting an auction through a computer network, the system comprising:

a merchandise posting mechanism configured to post merchandise information from at least one seller, the information being accessible through the computer network and describing at least one ~~[[in]]~~ of a plurality of lots available for auction, each lot including at least one item, the posting means available to add a lot of the plurality of lots for auction during an auction of another lot;

a bid receiver to receive a bid for at least a portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the lot of the plurality of lots;

a bid validator, during and prior to a close of the auction, to examine and validate a characteristic of the received bid and to store the bid in a bid database, wherein the characteristic is a bid format; and

an auction manager that queries the bid database to automatically determine whether the bid is successful or unsuccessful.

45. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, further comprising an auction selector to associate each lot of the plurality of lots with an auction format selected from a plurality of auction formats, at least two lots having different associated auction formats.

46. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 45, wherein an auction format of the plurality of auction formats comprises one from the group comprising: Dutch auction, standard auction, progressive auction, and buy or bid auction.

47. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the bid receiver receives the bid through a bid form.

48. (Currently Amended) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the merchandise posting mechanism is configured to receive a message posted through the computer network pertaining to at least ~~[[a]]~~ the portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the lot and to post the message in association with the descriptive information for ~~[[that]]~~ the lot.

49. (Canceled)

50. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, wherein the bid receiver receives bids on at least two lots that are simultaneously open for auction, the at least to lots having different associated auction formats.

51. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 50, wherein the auction manager automatically categorizes the received bids as successful or unsuccessful in accordance with the selected auction format for each lot.

52. (Previously Presented) The computer system in claim 44, further comprising proxy bidding means for automatically generating for the portion of the lot a subsequent bid based upon an initial bid provided by a bidder.